

Regulator of the medicinal cannabis bill 2014

To the regulator

I write this letter as a concerned citizen who has been following the cannabis debate for the past 20 years. I hold a degree in Science and have researched extensively on this subject. While my expertise is in the environmental sciences, medical science has been a hobby research topic for me for many years.

It is common knowledge that the dangers associated with cannabis use are minimal for the vast majority of people, unlike many other foodstuffs and medicines. In fact the Australian government's own document: Cannabis and mental health put into context, states there is no link between mental health disorders and cannabis use¹. When compared to even the most benign drugs, like paracetamol and aspirin, cannabis is considered a far safer drug. The reason for this is that it has a very high LD50, meaning that to die from cannabis consumption, a person would need to ingest an impossibly large amount, whereas, paracetamol and aspirin kill hundreds of people every year.

There have been many studies linking smoked cannabis with a variety of respiratory disease; however, the latest research is suggesting that these studies are flawed, generally because the researchers have not taken into account other causes of respiratory diseases, such as tobacco smoke. There is a misconception that to use cannabis you must also use tobacco, this simply is not true. However, while the latest research suggests smoked cannabis does not have a link with lung cancer and actually increases lung function, there is no doubt that smoke must have some detrimental effects of the respiratory system. Thus the use of vaporisers or ingesting cannabis products is a safe alternative to smoking.

Historically, fear has been used as a weapon in the war against drugs, and cannabis is no exception. It has been suggested countless times, in completely biased research papers, that cannabis causes psychosis and schizophrenia. However, it is now becoming apparent that cannabis is not the cause of these illnesses, but is often used by sufferers who are self medicating. In fact, the latest research suggests that cannabidiol is a far safer and more effective treatment for psychotic conditions than the current anti-psychotic drugs that are on the market. In addition, while cannabis in its raw form may not be suitable as a medicine, due to variability in the chemical composition. It is now apparent that historic research into the onset of psychotic illnesses via cannabis does not include robust statistical analysis, as the rate of psychotic illness remains steady at 1% of the population whether sufferers are cannabis users or not.

The Best model for medicinal cannabis in Australia

Due to the way drugs are approved in this country, it may not be possible to register cannabis with the therapeutic goods administration. Therefore an innovative approach must be brokered, as it is obvious that cannabis must be legalised as it is the safest treatment option for a variety of sufferers.

Therefore, it is proposed that cannabis clubs be legalised in this country, as they have been shown to be extremely successful in Spain, Portugal and Uruguay, where illicit drug use has plummeted, since the introduction of medicinal cannabis and the decriminalisation of cannabis. By legalising Cannabis clubs, medical patients can come to a place they know is safe and meet with other enthusiasts. I propose that cannabis clubs contain various interested parties, including medical doctors, psychologists, growers and patients. These people can collaborate, and find the best strain and method for treating their condition with cannabis, and indeed discover if cannabis is a suitable treatment for the issue at hand. With the cost of visiting a doctor increasing and consultation times decreasing, it is become harder and harder for doctors to communicate effectively with patients. Cannabis clubs could potentially relieve this burden from the health system.

Cannabis research over the last few years has become far more robust than in previous years, and that research is telling us that cannabis is a safe and effective treatment for a variety of medical issues. In fact the continuation of prohibition for both medical and recreational cannabis use does nothing but fuel criminal organisations and puts public safety at risk due to untested unregulated cannabis that is constantly available on the open black market.

The cost of prohibition

We are constantly being told by our government that we are in a fiscal hole, and we all need to tighten our belts and pay more tax, or pay more for doctors, or increase the GST etc..... Then why are we spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on the discovery and destruction of cannabis plants and then go on to spend money on court costs and gaol for the offenders? In NSW this year the police have spent an unreleased amount of money using helicopters to locate cannabis and then to destroy these plants. In fact, since the NSW government introduced the TICS scheme, people who are growing solely for medical patients have lost crops and been charged with drug production offences. According to a NSW newspaper, a medical cannabis patient was recently caught and charged with one 80cm high cannabis plant. WHY ARE OUR TAX DOLLARS FUNDING THIS???

If you think about it rationally, the only people that could be reasonably expected to support prohibition are the criminal gangs that have turned prohibition into big business. A vote for criminalisation of cannabis is a vote for crime gangs.

It is high time our law enforcement agencies targeted threats to the community, not cannabis.

In conclusion, cannabis is proven to be far safer than any other drug on the market, and the only politicians that should support the continuation of cannabis prohibition, are politicians who support crime gangs, murder and putting their constituents in danger through the creation of an unregulated market.